



# Holden Lane Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 124021  
**Local Authority** Stoke-On-Trent  
**Inspection number** 292862  
**Inspection date** 12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Graham Sims

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Ralph Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community		Sneyd Green
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11		Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6JS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234890
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	202	<b>Fax number</b>	01782 234762
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Keith Titley
		<b>Headteacher</b>	H Leek
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3-11	12 October 2006	292862

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Holden Lane Primary School is an average sized primary school which serves a socially and economically disadvantaged estate on the northern outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and disabilities are well above the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those at an early stage of learning English are close to the national average, but rising. An increasingly large number of pupils join the school part way through their primary education.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

For many pupils, Holden Lane Primary School is a haven which provides them with a peaceful, caring and supportive environment in which to learn. It is a good school, which enables all of its pupils to make good progress in their academic and personal development. It helps many of them to cope with very difficult circumstances in the turbulent world which exists outside the school gates. Good leadership and management have ensured that the school continues to offer a similarly high quality of education that existed at the time of its previous inspection, five years ago. Comments from parents, such as 'The headteacher and the staff do a brilliant job', and 'The school environment is a fantastic place for my child to learn', are typical of the overwhelmingly positive and fully justified views of parents about the school.

With its strong emphasis on practical activity, the good curriculum is adapted particularly well to meet the very wide range of needs within the school and succeeds in motivating the pupils. This, combined with good quality teaching, enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well. The skills shown by most children when they start the Nursery or join the school at any stage up to Year 6 are well below average, but they leave with average standards in English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, the poor communication skills of the school's youngest children and the well below average standards in English at the end of Year 2 emphasise the appropriateness of the school's main development priority. This priority is to improve the quality of pupils' speaking, reading and listening skills. Staff work very hard at this, but do not always make the best use of the many opportunities to develop speaking and writing skills which present themselves throughout the day. They do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to read and discuss books with adults.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good, and aspects of pastoral care are outstanding. The school does a very good job in helping the pupils to feel safe and secure within school. Its pastoral care extends to helping many parents develop greater involvement in their children's education. Relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school are excellent. The outstanding efforts of staff in the Nursery and Reception enable children to settle well in school and lay the foundations for pupils' good personal development. Despite occasional lapses, the standard of behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils learn to take on responsibility, to develop caring attitudes towards others and to cooperate and work collaboratively. Pupils enjoy coming to school, although this is not reflected in the below average attendance rate. Despite significant efforts by the school, too many parents bring their children to school late and keep them away from school for inappropriate reasons.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are driving forces behind the school's success. They inspire loyalty from their staff and respect from parents. They have a very good understanding of the school and what it needs to do to become even better. With committed and hardworking staff and new subject leaders who are already showing a good grasp of their responsibilities, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pupils' communication skills through developing oral responses in class, providing more opportunities for pupils to read and discuss books with adults, and introducing more writing activities in subjects, such as history and geography.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The picture of well below average standards when children start school and average standards when they leave is the clearest indicator that pupils of all abilities achieve well in this school. However, pupils do not progress at the same rate in all areas of learning. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, children make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. However, the very poor communication, language and literacy skills with which many children start school are still evident in the exceptionally low standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. Pupils reap the reward of the school's approach to developing personal skills first, as they make rapid progress in Years 3 to 6 and achieve average standards in English by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and science are average at the end of Year 6, and progress is more constant in these subjects. However, pupils' ability to deal with some aspects of the work in these subjects, such as problem solving, is hampered by their language skills.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Whilst the school and pupils do not deny that there is occasional bullying and some bad behaviour, a good ethos prevails throughout the school. Pupils quickly develop a good understanding of right and wrong. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils develop good social responsibility, with pupils in Year 5 acting as buddies for younger pupils. Those in Year 6 carry out helpful tasks as prefects. The school council provides an effective avenue for pupils' views and has been the catalyst for improvements, such as the now attractive decor in the pupils' toilets. Within school, pupils demonstrate good understanding of what is required to lead a healthy lifestyle and adopt safe practices.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers are good at adapting their teaching to meet the needs of their pupils. The lively and exuberant teaching style of the teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes captivates the children's attention. It helps them to develop really positive attitudes

to school. In Years 1 and 2, teachers provide a longer transition to more formal styles of teaching than is normal. They plan a lot of practical activities which help pupils to feel involved and to enjoy their learning. In Years 3 to 6, teachers capitalise on the solid foundations which have been laid and develop pupils' abilities to work collaboratively and independently. Teaching assistants provide skilful teaching for small groups of pupils. They play a significant role in helping pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress. Teachers plan and structure their lessons well, but do not always take hold of opportunities during class or groups discussions to develop pupils' speaking skills. They too readily accept one-word or poorly phrased answers. As many pupils do not read at home, more opportunities are needed in school for pupils to read to adults.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is adapted effectively to ensure the provision of stimulating learning experiences. Very attractive displays throughout the school attest to interesting activities, such as a large three-dimensional display focusing on healthy eating. Subjects such as art, drama and music are strong and provide good outlets for pupils' talents. Music benefits from the teaching of a specialist teacher, and the singing heard during an assembly was quite uplifting. Some subjects, such as history and geography, do not receive enough attention. The school has not found enough ways of developing pupils' reading and writing skills through these subjects. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors adds further dimension to the curriculum. Residential visits for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are outstanding elements. They make a vitally important contribution to pupils' personal development. Wherever possible, the school harnesses contributions from external partners. Their work with College in the Community has been particularly successful in providing opportunities for parents to access education and helping them to learn alongside their children.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school involves itself in a much wider range of initiatives than many schools to ensure pupils' well-being. Excellent pastoral care starts from the moment children enter the Nursery. The significant number of vulnerable children are looked after very well. Good links with external agencies help to ensure that they make good progress. Procedures to ensure the protection of children within school are clear, efficient and well documented. A team of people, including the home-school worker, educational welfare officer and administrative and teaching staff, provide important links with parents and work tirelessly to encourage better attendance. The school keeps careful track of pupils' progress and uses its assessment information well to identify particular needs, to provide additional support and to determine the most appropriate curriculum. Day-to-day academic guidance through the marking of pupils' work is not as strong. The marking in some classes is cursory and provides little guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Strong leadership by the school's headteacher and deputy headteacher has ensured that the school has maintained the strengths noted in the previous inspection. It has dealt well with key issues relating to the use of assessment information and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Writing continues to be an area for development. A more concerted effort is needed to ensure that staff make better use of opportunities to develop these skills through subjects such as geography and history. The school has recently lost a number of senior teachers, but new subject leaders are already making an impact on their subject areas. Excellent arrangements have been introduced to enable all staff to have an input into school development planning. The views of parents are canvassed regularly, and detailed feedback is provided through the school newsletter on the outcomes and action taken. The governing body is currently in a state of transition, with the resignation of a long-standing chair and the loss of a number of other governors. Steps are being taken to ensure that it resumes its regulatory and supportive functions as soon as possible.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I very much enjoyed my visit to your school to find out how well the school is doing. Thank you for making me feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to me. Those of you to whom I spoke, and all of the parents who returned their questionnaires to me, think Holden Lane is a good school – I agree! These are the main things that are going well

- You make good progress in your work during your time at Holden Lane.
- You clearly enjoy school and participate well in lessons.
- You are polite and well behaved which ensures that there is a good atmosphere within the school which helps you to learn.
- You receive good teaching and helpful support from all of your teachers.
- The school provides a good range of additional activities, particularly the residential trips for those of you in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- The school takes very good care of you and is very helpful to those of you who have personal problems or difficulties with your learning.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead and manage the school well and receive good support from the hardworking and committed staff.

There are no major weaknesses in the school, but many of you struggle somewhat with your speaking, reading and writing skills. I have asked your teachers to

- Help you develop your speaking skills when you answer questions in class
- Provide more opportunities for you to read and discuss books with adults
- Provide more opportunities to practise your writing skills when you are learning subjects such as history and geography.

Two things all of you can do to help you to be successful in school, are to ensure that you are in school every day and that you arrive on time ready to learn.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Holden Lane.